Quantifying the Knowledge of Public Management Professionals: Developing an Assessment Tool for Local Government Managers

Abstract

This article describes an ongoing effort by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) to assess the knowledge of practicing local government managers. The development of the Applied Knowledge Assessment is described, as are some of the controversial issues that surround this effort. Work began on this assessment tool in 1997, and it is now required to become an ICMA credentialed manager. This article also examines the demographics of the 1603 participants who have taken this instrument to date. This insider's view of this process should help to stimulate a wider dialogue about the role of these types of assessment tools in the field of public administration.

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At the turn of the last century, the progressive movement helped spur an interest in professionalism and professionalization that is still changing how we work and live (Larson 1977). The drive for professionalization was fueled by a mixture of motives, ranging from a fervent belief in the power of science and technology to opportunism and self-interest (Friedson 1971; Willbern 1954). Specialized, expert knowledge was the "lifeblood" of these new professionals, offering at least the promise of autonomy, social status, and wealth. Professional organizations facilitated these developments by offering membership standards, the power to enforce codes of behavior, and a service orientation (Moore 1970).

The field of public administration was quick to embrace professionalization. In the 30 years between 1910 and 1940, important professional organizations such as the American Society for Public Administration were formed and a number of early scholars had begun to develop a useful knowledge base (Gulick and Urwick 1937; Taylor 1911). The field was becoming a "science," noted one early textbook (White 1926). This ambitious agenda quickly unraveled, however, dissolving in the failure of the Brownlow Report (Rosenbloom 2001), and claims of scientific pretensions (Dahl 1947; Key 1940; Simon 1946). The other shoe fell when professionalism was described as both a threat to democracy (Appleby 1952; Mosher 1982; Willbern 1954) and selfish (Waldo 1968).

The withering attacks on public administration professionalism certainly left their mark and professionalization progressed more slowly in public administration than in many other fields. There has been a strong focus on ethics, in the spirit of Mosher's (1982) comments about making public administration safe for democracy. In recent years, a number of authors stepped forward to argue the virtues of professionalization (Hays 1996; Kearney 1988; Sherwood 1997), but the critiques have not stopped. Questions continue to be raised about the potential conflicts between public administration professionalization and democracy (Adams 1993; Green, Keller, and Wamsley 1993), and the knowledge base of public administration has also faced renewed scrutiny (Houston and Delevan 1990; McCurdy and Cleary 1984).

While these ongoing debates have raised many valid concerns, they have not halted the process of professionalization, which has accelerated in both public administration and elsewhere (Burgoyne 1990; Holmes 1995). This is our zeitgeist--the spirit of our time--to be seeking greater productivity and performance. This ambition is reflected in spirited defenses of good public management (Ingraham et al. 2003), the growth of bottom-line oriented managerialism (Terry 1998), and an explosion of new credentials and certifications in a variety of fields (Coward 1999; Solnik 2003).   In our cynical times, a title is no longer enough to establish competence, and many different occupations are exploring ways to better document skills, knowledge, and abilities. This is uncharted territory, as there is little agreement over what competency actually involves (Cheng, Dainty, and Moore 2002).

In this article, we examine an effort to assess the knowledge of local government managers—the development of the Applied Knowledge Assessment by the International

City/County Management Association (ICMA). This instrument is one facet of a new program that allows local government managers to receive a professional credential (Newell and Ferguson 2002). As the name implies, the goal of this instrument is to assess the applied (job) knowledge of practicing local government managers. It contains a series of multiple-choice items that seek to address both professional judgment and fact-based knowledge. There have been no studies about how ICMA members feel about these new innovations, but there is anecdotal evidence that some have lingering doubts. What is known is that the Applied Knowledge Assessment is an ICMA top seller and that a many practicing managers have applied for the new credential (Hansell 2002).

The Voluntary Credentialing Program

The professional attributes of local government managers have been well documented (Nalbandian 1990); however, until recently, their main claim to professional status was a shared commitment to the values expressed in the code of ethics that ICMA adopted in 1924. Similarly, the model city charter also did not set any specific educational or experience requirements (Hansell 2001). Changes came only in the last few years. The eighth edition of the charter, published in spring of 2003, emphasized the need for city managers with appropriate competencies (Gates and Loper 2003), and the ICMA voluntary credentialing program was also established about this same time.

Although consistent with changes in the world of work and the revised charter, the development of a credential for local government managers was a radical act for an organization that had maintained a relatively consistent stance on professionalization since

1914. This was not an impulsive move, however. The development of the credential was part of an evolutionary process that began in 1992 with a "Dialogue on the Profession." This was a two-year effort that involved 33 dialogues at ICMA meetings across the nation and two mailed surveys (Streib, Slotkin, and Rivera 2001). The process was a demanding struggle, and as the ICMA Executive Director during this period has stated, there was not an immediate desire for action on the part of the ICMA membership (Hansell, 2002).

Despite the many challenges, the Dialogue on the Profession did produce a couple of critical breakthroughs. These included a listing of the competencies needed by local government managers (the Practices for Effective Local Government Managers) and the modification of the ICMA Code of Ethics that required a measurable commitment to ongoing professional development. These steps created the foundation needed for the later development of the Applied Knowledge Assessment and the establishment of a voluntary credentialing program.

The wisdom of these changes will certainly be debated for many years to come, however, and there are some reasons why some managers might view the new emphasis on competency as a threat. It seems somewhat counter-intuitive, but professionalization in this political context could lead to increased mistrust (Box 1993). There is evidence that aggressive or self-centered managers are often viewed with disdain by city council members (Carrell 1962), and managers frequently argue the merits of a more low-key approach to fulfilling their responsibilities (Dugan 1991). City managers often operate in a tumultuous environment, and virtually any sort of serious dissatisfaction can lead to job loss, and, in some cases, even the abandonment of the council-manager form of

government (Protasel 1988). The roles of appointed administrators in other types of local government positions are probably even more constrained (Svara 1993).

The Credential Requirements

To receive the new voluntary credential, members must complete the following requirements:

> ➢ Membership in ICMA;
>
> ➢ Completion of the Applied Knowledge Assessment;
>
> ➢ At least a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution;
>
> ➢ Executive experience of 7 to 9 years (depending on education; and,
>
> ➢ Submission of an annual professional development plan and an annual report of professional development activities completed.

Within 5 years of receiving the credential, credentialed managers are required to complete a multi-rater or "360-degree" performance-based assessment (or submit a comparable evaluation report from another source). The credential remains in force for 10 years. Maintaining the credential requires conformance with the ICMA code of ethics and an annual report detailing 40 hours of professional development.

Developing the Applied Knowledge Assessment

The AKA Instrument was developed by a group of faculty and staff who responded to a request for proposals announcement by ICMA, and work began in the winter of 1997. The goal was to develop an instrument that could assess the professional knowledge of local government managers and help to guide their professional development efforts. This is a tall order, but the task was made manageable by the fact that ICMA had already developed the Practices for Effective Local Government Management. The 29 practices (now reorganized into 18) document what it takes to be an effective local government manager—in the words of the managers themselves. A copy of the ICMA practices (in their current form) is available in Appendix A.

Development of the AKA took roughly 18 months, and the first printing of the instrument took place in the spring of 1999. Sales were initially slow, but spiked fairly dramatically once the voluntary credentialing program began. To date, 1603 managers have taken the Applied Knowledge Assessment instrument. The major steps in the development process are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Applied Knowledge Assessment Development Timeline

1997	*Winter*	➔	ICMA and Georgia State University sign contract
		➔	ICMA and Georgia State University collaborate on instrument specifications
1998	*Spring*	➔	Item development workshops with 200 local government managers
1999	*Spring*	➔	Final item selection at local meeting venues
	Summer	➔	Conference calls to edit and select final item pools and items
	Fall	➔	Item validation at ICMA Conference
2000	*Winter*	➔	Instrument norms are established
	Spring	➔	Instrument and reporting formats are finalized
			Applied Knowledge Assessment goes to print
2004	*Spring*	➔	1603 participants to date

The development of the AKA was a team effort, involving both the faculty development team and ICMA members. ICMA staff played a critical role in organizing the effort, but there was direct contact with the ICMA membership from the start. ICMA staff facilitated the process, but this effort was driven by ICMA members who had volunteered their time. Leadership decisions were made by the ICMA Executive Board and the ICMA University Board of Regents (who played an important role in helping to develop education and training opportunities for members). There were intense early discussions, as all parties struggled to develop a process for developing the Applied Knowledge Assessment. Contact was maintained through in-person meetings, telephone conferences, and Email discussions.

The Choice of a Written Instrument

As discussed above, certification and credentialing are widespread. New developments are tracked and documented (Barnhart 1997; Bianco 1996), and the requirements for a number of specific types of jobs are widely known. Written tests commonly play an important role, and passing scores are often required. This is true for doctors and lawyers, who are also licensed by the states. There are also federal jobs that require passing scores on job-appropriate tests--with agencies such as the Federal Aviation Administration, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Federal Communications Commission (Coward 1999).

Certification for Fire Chiefs is a slightly different process from those discussed above. A passing score on an exam is required for certification (Anonymous 1999), but certification is not required to be a Fire Chief. As with the Fire Chief certification, there is no specific credential needed to be hired as a local government manager. An additional difference, however, is that there is no passing score on the ICMA Applied Knowledge Assessment. The AKA scoring report is intended to guide professional development efforts. While the new ICMA credential does support some additional claims of competency, these are derived more from the general education and experience requirements than specialized, testable knowledge.

Although certification tests have become commonplace, they do raise validity concerns. Questions have been raised about the validity of instruments used in other fields where "generalist" knowledge is being assessed (Sirotnik and Durden 1996; Thyer and Vodde 1994). One way that ICMA has addressed the validity issue is to require credentialed managers to also complete a performance-based assessment. The

performance-based measure is not addressed in this article, but requiring these two

instruments does strengthen the ICMA credentialing process.

Instrument Specifications

Instrument specifications were developed collaboratively with Georgia State University

(GSU) faculty and ICMA officers and staff. It was determined that the Applied

Knowledge Assessment (AKA) should meet the follow specifications:

 - ➢ scores on each of 17 groups for effective local government (the 18th practice has no measurable content);
 - ➢ feedback on each practice;
 - ➢ completion in a reasonable timeframe – no more than 90 minutes;
 - ➢ remote completion availability;
 - ➢ a straightforward format;
 - ➢ hardcopy of the tool – no electronic component required;
 - ➢ both knowledge and situational judgment items;
 - ➢ a variety of item length across practices and content areas;
 - ➢ a variety of difficulty across practices and content areas; and
 - ➢ a variety of correct responses across practices and content areas.

Developing an Item Pool

The GSU team matched faculty members to different ICMA practices, based on their

interest and expertise. Five public administration faculty members were involved, as was

one research associate (a psychologist) who guided the quantitative methodology and

design aspects of the AKA development. This team spent approximately two months generating item pools within their respective areas. Weekly review meetings were held in where items, stems and response options were discussed, assessed and edited. The team produced an initial AKA pool of 150 items across 17 core content areas.

The faculty team then worked with ICMA staff to conduct item development workshops across the country. Local government managers and administrators who were also ICMA members were invited to participate in these workshops. An effort was made to select knowledgeable and thoughtful managers from each region and include about ten in each workshop. Sessions lasted one day, often coinciding with regional ICMA meetings. Workshops were conducted in Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Oregon, and Washington, D.C. during 1998.

Workshop attendees received draft items by mail prior to attendance for their review.   Then, at the workshop, each item was evaluated for clarity, relevance, validity, and consistency. Revisions were made, as needed, and sometimes the discussions led to the creation of entirely new items. The research associate maintained the item pool as it changed and grew. The system was effective enough to allow for an updated item packet to be sent to local managers prior to the next workshop. Many of the items were reviewed multiple times, by a series of independent groups. Item packets included the following components:

> **Item number:** For tracking and discussion purposes, each item was assigned an item number. The first digit of the tracking number conveyed the practice area (1-8), the second conveyed the core content area (1-17), and the last two digits provided a unique, unrepeated identification number. This allowed assessment of items by practice and core content area and facilitated easy reference to items during discussions with members in person, by telephone or via Email.

Item stem: The actual question.

Proposed item response options: The response options for the question.

In addition to selecting what they felt was the best or "correct" answer from the options provided, managers were encouraged to revise, replace and/or add item stems and response options. Managers also had the option of selecting items to delete. They were then asked to return the packets they reviewed within 10 days--and prior to the workshop that they would attend. Attendees were provided the following data for each item prior to their workshop:

- The number of managers choosing each response option (with the "correct" response highlighted).
- The proportion of managers who agreed with the "correct" response.
- The number of managers indicating more than one "correct" response.
- The number of managers indicating no "correct" response was evident.
- The proportion of managers indicating that the item was either "fine" or "needs work".
- All written comments to date by managers regarding each item.

Item development concluded with two key steps. First, a two-day item review meeting was conducted in Irving, Texas. At this stage, each participating manager received roughly one third of the items—given that the pool had grown too large to ask any single person to review all the items. Managers were asked to send the items back with feedback prior to the meeting, if possible. Approximately 50 percent (17 of 30) of managers returned their packets. In addition to what had become standard item review information collected prior to item review workshops, participants were again asked to rate each item's general level of readiness by indicating "Fine," "Needs a Little Work," "Needs

a Lot of Work," and/or "Multiple Options Correct." The feedback received from managers indicated that that only 20 percent of items were either considered "fine" (no changes needed) or needed to be eliminated from further consideration. The remaining 80 percent were judged to need some tweaking of stems and/or response options.

The two-day item review then sought to maximize manager input by holding three sessions with about 10 managers each. Managers from Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island and Texas attended sessions. Additionally, one ICMA staff member, a member of the ICMA University Board of Regents, and at least two faculty team members were included in each review session.

One third of the existing item pool was reviewed during each session. Each item was reviewed for changes that would lead to development of a final (clean) item. For the majority of items, managers were able to specify changes needed to consider the item final. Items in which no agreement could be reached regarding refinement were dropped from the pool.

Refining the Item Pool

The second key step toward finalization of the item pool involved collaboration with the ICMA Director of Publications, the Director of Professional Development, a liaison from the ICMA University Board of Regents, and members of the GSU Faculty team. Approximately ten conference calls were conducted with each focusing on different items, typically along practice lines. Intermittently, item refinement occurred both at ICMA and at GSU. The ICMA staff amplified its refinement efforts by involving others

within ICMA staff to review item content -- for instance, the ICMA ethics staff reviewed items with specific reference to the ICMA Code of Ethics, and public information staff reviewed those items related to media relations.

Once item development was finalized, a random stratified sample of local government managers was generated. This sample accounted for job title (Manager/Non-manager), government population size (Under 10,000, 10,000-49,999, 50,000 and over), and years of experience of the manager (less than 8 years, and 8 or more years). A sampling frame was used to select members within each stratum for participation in validating the AKA assessment tool. Validation of the AKA by managers could occur "in-person" at the 1999 ICMA annual conference in Orlando or by mail. ICMA invited participation from this pool of members by letter and GSU mailed the AKA if they were unable to attend the conference.

Approximately 250 managers participated in the validation session at the Orlando conference. Managers were allotted approximately 90 minutes to complete the assessment as well as a short survey regarding their perceptions of the instrument's relevance and validity. Most managers were able to complete the draft AKA in the allotted time, thus meeting an important goal of the final instrument. A few managers voiced concerns that the instrument was too long, that some key issues related to effective local government practice in their region were not represented, and/or that the assessment had too much content within a particular practice area. Some results of the validation survey conducted in Orlando are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Manager Views of AKA Validation Items (In Percentages)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
Items on the assessment are realistic and they reflect situations affecting local government managers	NA	3.9%	21.9%	43.0%	31.3%
Items on the assessment cover the knowledge areas needed for effective local government management	1.0	5.4	17.8	51.2	24.8
The answer options are consistent with actions that local government managers might consider	2.3	6.3	27.3	52.3	11.7

As the table shows, manager assessments of the AKA items tended to be fairly positive. At least 60 percent of the respondents agreed that the items presented realistic situations, covered the knowledge needed for effective local government management, and that the answer options were consistent with actions that managers might consider. Support was weakest for the answer options.

Final Stages

The responses to the draft AKA items were carefully studied. Factor analysis and scale reliabilities checked against expert knowledge. Expert knowledge was given precedence over any type of statistical "fit." Many items were dropped that did not fit with other items measuring the same practice. Some items were also removed that failed to discriminate between high and low scoring participants.

Once the final pool of items was selected, a scoring process was developed that was consistent with methods recommended by the National Council on Measurement in Education and the American Council on Education. The approach used allows points to be assigned to items based on item difficulty with more difficult items assigned greater point value. This calculation factors in guessing and, in turn, results in a scaled score.

Final details included several months of discussions concerning the layout of the instrument, the packaging, the management of the scored instruments, and data maintenance. To this day, the scoring is conducted for ICMA by the same University team that developed the instrument.

The Use of the Applied Knowledge Assessment

The AKA participants do mirror the composition of the local government profession. As shown in Figure 1, the vast majority are older than 36, and almost half are older than 46. This is consistent with an analysis of practicing managers conducted by Renner (2001), which showed that most practicing managers in the nation are in the age range of 35-60. While there has been no quantitative study of the process managers go through in assessing the value of the AKA, the participation rates to date suggest that the AKA, and the credentialing process, do appeal to mainstream managers.
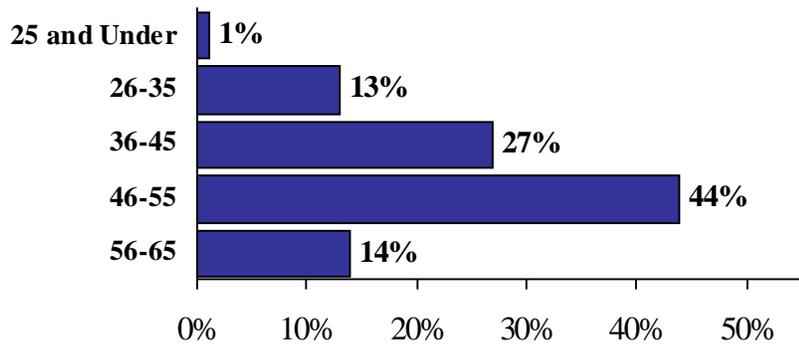
Figure 1: Ages of AKA Participants since Inception (N=1577)

As shown in Figure 2, over 69 percent of the local government managers taking the AKA are the top administrator in a city or county. Assistant managers are the next largest group, trailing far behind. While these findings do raise questions about the appeal of the AKA beyond city management, they do also show that a high number of practicing city managers participated. Roughly 1000 of the AKA participants to date are practicing city managers. This is nearly 25% of the ICMA membership currently in-service in city manager positions.
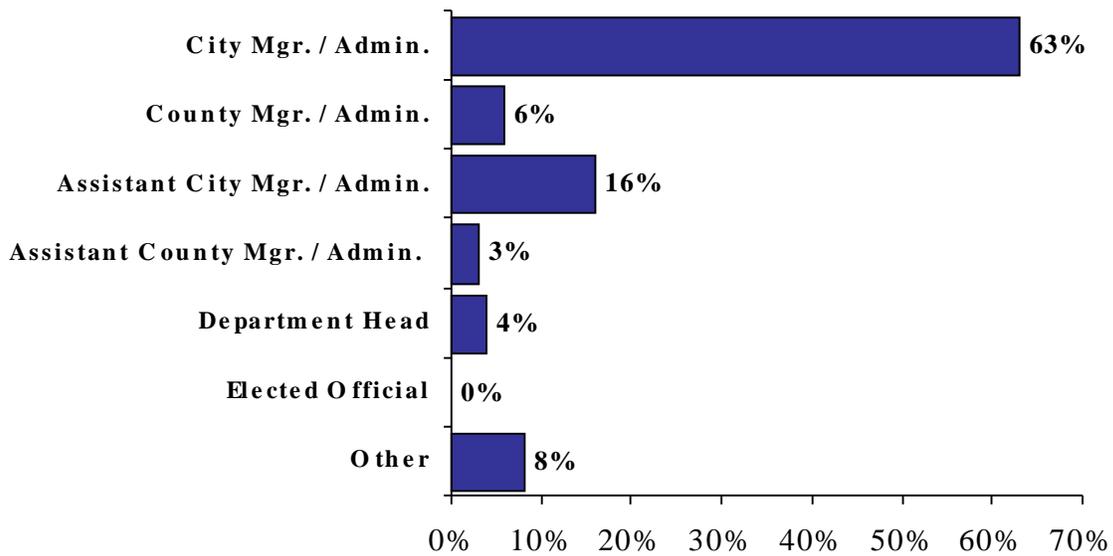
Figure 2: Positions Held by AKA Participants since Inception (N=1597)

Figure 3 offers another perspective on those managers who have taken the AKA to date. As the Figure shows, the managers taking the AKA tend to have many years of local government experience. These findings are also consistent with what is known about the demographics of local government managers. The Renner (2001) study found that the average years in the profession was about 17 years.
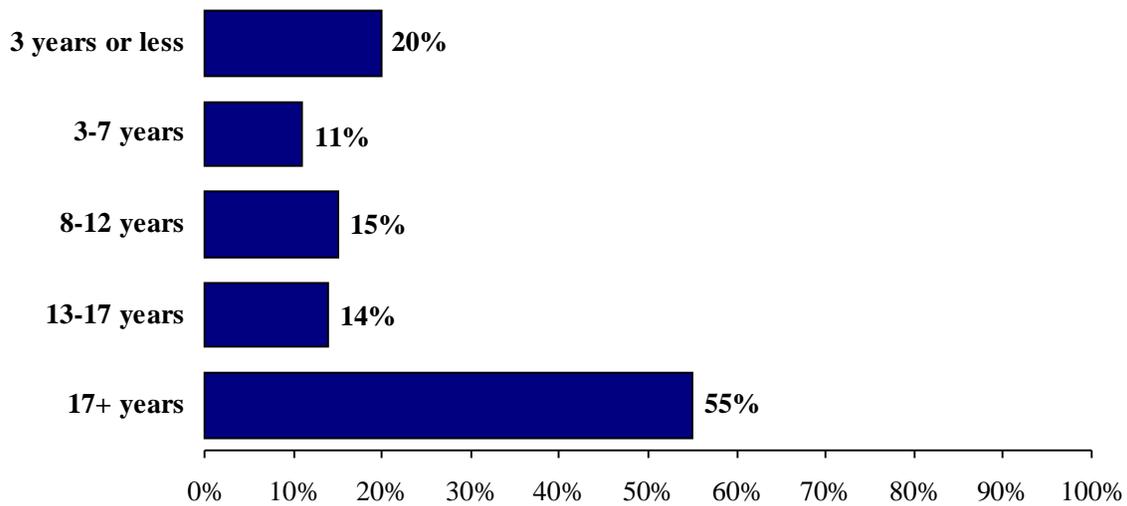
Figure 3: Years in Local Government for AKA Participants since Inception (N=1568)

Figure 4 looks at geographic representation. As the figure shows, the AKA participants are drawn from every region of the nation. There is not an even spread across the four regions, but this is not how local government managers are distributed. There are more local government managers in the south, for example. This region accounts for 33% of the total population of local government managers, according to the Renner (2001) study. This is very close to the percentage of AKA participants from that region. The participation rates for local government managers from the West and North Central regions are almost identical to the population figures (the population figures are 18 percent for the West and 28 percent for North Central). The only noteworthy variation is for the Northeast. Only 14 percent of the AKA participants are from this region, as opposed to 21 percent of the local government manager population.
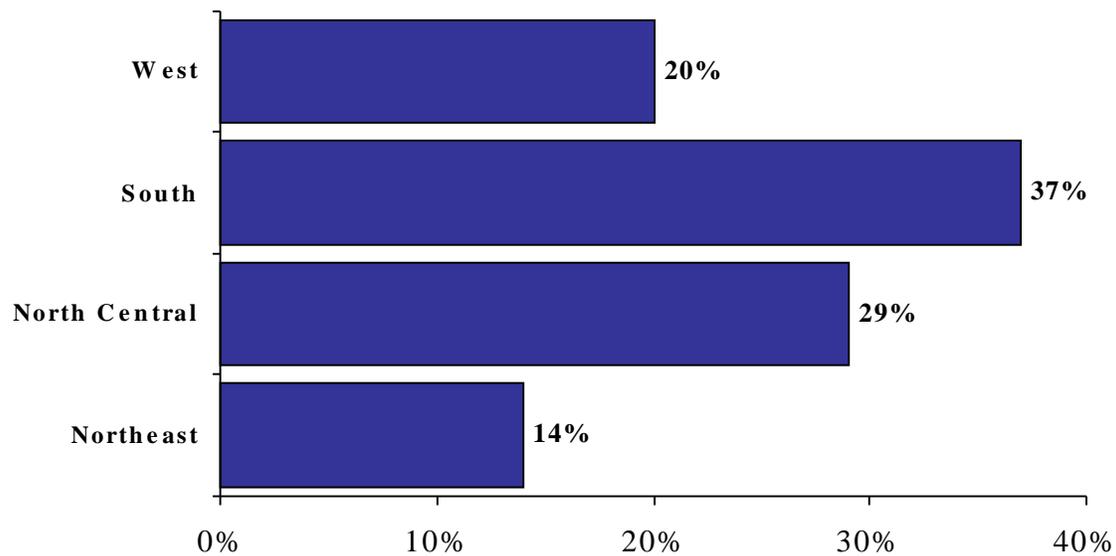
Figure 4: Regional Distribution of AKA Participants since Inception (N=1594)

Conclusion

Our insider's view of the development of the Applied Knowledge Assessment suggests that this effort was a high priority for both the ICMA and local government managers. Literally hundreds of practicing managers contributed their time to make the AKA possible. This assessment tool was developed by the ICMA membership in a very real way. It was not imposed on them by the development team. Further, the AKA is being used; the data to date show that the participants are broadly representative of local government managers.

The ICMA credentialing process may also be a breakthrough of a sort in the professionalization of the public service. From the academic side, there was little evidence of progress after decades of ongoing debates, but practitioners may be better able to

identify and assess the knowledge that they use on a daily basis. Apart from the development of the ICMA practices, the AKA instrument, and the credentialing process--there is also the ICMA University, an explosion of practitioner relevant publications, and a performance-based assessment instrument.

There is no way of knowing exactly where the process of professionalization of local government managers is headed, but trends in society suggest that updated versions of the Applied Knowledge Assessment instrument will be needed at some point, along with further honing of the local government management knowledge base. The AKA represents a first try at a very tough job, and it is unlikely to be the last such effort. Maintaining the AKA will require an ongoing commitment to develop, disseminate, and assess new knowledge. Although the AKA was developed in partnership with a university, it remains unclear as to how the ICMA can build a real nexus between the academic and practitioner communities. Efforts are underway, of course, but past attempts have established few genuine partnerships.

The Applied Knowledge Assessment does have flaws. The main weakness of the AKA is that, from the beginning, it needed to be completed in 90 minutes, and this is a requirement that came directly from the ICMA Executive Board. This time limit makes sense, give that the intention was to use the instrument for career development purposes, but 90 minutes is not enough time to assess fully the knowledge possessed by seasoned local government managers. Improvements to the AKA would inevitably increase the length, and this will only happen if the need for a more comprehensive test emerges over time. The future role of the AKA and the need for other instruments will be a decision that needs to be made by the ICMA membership.

It would be foolish to underestimate the barriers that exist to professionalizing local government managers and other public service professions. As was noted above, this effort brings along quite a bit of baggage. Critiques of the ICMA credential have yet to appear in print, but this is certain to happen at some point. While the AKA purports to measure the knowledge and judgment of local government managers, a passing score is not required for certification, and this is a potential lightening rod for those seeking to question the professional status of local government managers. Further, if the goal is to measure competency, then there is sure to be quite a bit of discussion about the best way to do this. The AKA appears to work reasonably well, but there are many other approaches that could also be investigated. The AKA is paired with a performance-based assessment tool, but the fit between these two assessment methods has yet to be studied.

This article offered an introduction to the Applied Knowledge Assessment, and this may spur a greater interest in this topic. The AKA and other ICMA developments are certainly worthy of further discussion and debate. The ICMA has shown considerable leadership in developing the AKA and the related support structures for professional development and assessment. It will take time to put these efforts into an appropriate context.

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APPENDIX A

ICMA PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT

Practices for Effective Local Government Management

In 1991 the ICMA Executive Board convened the Task Force on Continuing Education and Professional Development to identify the competencies and skills required of an effective local government manager. During a process facilitated by the task force, ICMA members agreed that the following Practices are essential to effective local government management. For convenience, the Practices were originally organized into eight groupings. With the development of the Management Practices Assessment, it became clear that for professional development purposes the practices more clearly fall into 18 "core content areas," as shown below. These are the same Practices that members developed and approved. They are simply organized differently.

1. Staff Effectiveness: Promoting the development and performance of staff and employees throughout the organization (requires knowledge of interpersonal relations; skill in motivation techniques; ability to identify others' strengths and weaknesses). Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **COACHING/MENTORING** Providing direction, support, and feedback to enable others to meet their full potential (requires knowledge of feedback techniques; ability to assess performance and identify others' developmental needs)

- **TEAM LEADERSHIP** Facilitating teamwork (requires knowledge of team relations; ability to direct and coordinate group efforts; skill in leadership techniques)

- **EMPOWERMENT** Creating a work environment that encourages responsibility and decision making at all organizational levels (requires skill in sharing authority and removing barriers to creativity)

- **DELEGATING** Assigning responsibility to others (requires skill in defining expectations, providing direction and support, and evaluating results)

2. Policy Facilitation: Helping elected officials and other community actors identify, work toward, and achieve common goals and objectives (requires knowledge of group dynamics and political behavior; skill in communication, facilitation, and consensus-building techniques; ability to engage others in identifying issues and outcomes). Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **FACILITATIVE LEADERSHIP** Building cooperation and consensus among and within diverse groups, helping them identify common goals and act effectively to achieve them; recognizing interdependent relationships and multiple causes of

community issues and anticipating the consequences of policy decisions (requires knowledge of community actors and their interrelationships)

- **FACILITATING COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS** Helping elected officials develop a policy agenda that can be implemented effectively and that serves the best interests of the community (requires knowledge of role/authority relationships between elected and appointed officials; skill in responsibly following the lead of others when appropriate; ability to communicate sound information and recommendations)

- **MEDIATION/NEGOTIATION** Acting as a neutral party in the resolution of policy disputes (requires knowledge of mediation/negotiation principles; skill in mediation/negotiation techniques)

3. Functional and Operational Expertise and Planning (a component of Service Delivery Management): Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **FUNCTIONAL/OPERATIONAL EXPERTISE** Understanding the basic principles of service delivery in functional areas--e.g., public safety, community and economic development, human and social services, administrative services, public works (requires knowledge of service areas and delivery options)

- **OPERATIONAL PLANNING** Anticipating future needs, organizing work operations, and establishing timetables for work units or projects (requires knowledge of technological advances and changing standards; skill in identifying and understanding trends; skill in predicting the impact of service delivery decisions)

4. Citizen Service (a component of Service Delivery Management): Determining citizen needs and providing responsive, equitable services to the community (requires skill in assessing community needs and allocating resources; knowledge of information gathering techniques)

5. Quality Assurance (a component of Service Delivery Management): Maintaining a consistently high level of quality in staff work, operational procedures, and service delivery (requires knowledge of organizational processes; ability to facilitate organizational improvements; ability to set performance/ productivity standards and objectives and measure results)

6. Initiative, Risk Taking, Vision, Creativity, and Innovation (a component of Strategic Leadership): Setting an example that urges the organization and the community toward experimentation, change, creative problem solving, and prompt action (requires knowledge of personal leadership style; skill in visioning, shifting perspectives, and identifying options; ability to create an environment that encourages initiative and innovation). Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **INITIATIVE AND RISK TAKING** Demonstrating a personal orientation toward action and accepting responsibility for the results; resisting the status quo and removing stumbling blocks that delay progress toward goals and objectives

- **VISION** Conceptualizing an ideal future state and communicating it to the organization and the community

- **CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION** Developing new ideas or practices; applying existing ideas and practices to new situations

7. Technological Literacy (a component of Strategic Leadership): Demonstrating an understanding of information technology and ensuring that it is incorporated appropriately in plans to improve service delivery, information sharing, organizational communication, and citizen access (requires knowledge of technological options and their application)

8. Democratic Advocacy and Citizen Participation: Demonstrating a commitment to democratic principles by respecting elected officials, community interest groups, and the decision making process; educating citizens about local government; and acquiring knowledge of the social, economic, and political history of the community (requires knowledge of democratic principles, political processes, and local government law; skill in group dynamics, communication, and facilitation; ability to appreciate and work with diverse individuals and groups and to follow the community's lead in the democratic process). Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **DEMOCRATIC ADVOCACY** Fostering the values and integrity of representative government and local democracy through action and example; ensuring the effective participation of local government in the intergovernmental system (requires knowledge and skill in intergovernmental relations)

- **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION** Recognizing the right of citizens to influence local decisions and promoting active citizen involvement in local governance

9. Diversity: Understanding and valuing the differences among individuals and fostering these values throughout the organization and the community

10. Budgeting: Preparing and administering the budget (requires knowledge of budgeting principles and practices, revenue sources, projection techniques, and financial control systems; skill in communicating financial information)

11. Financial Analysis: Interpreting financial information to assess the short-term and long-term fiscal condition of the community, determine the cost-effectiveness of programs, and compare alternative strategies (requires knowledge of analytical techniques and skill in applying them)

12. Human Resources Management: Ensuring that the policies and procedures for employee hiring, promotion, performance appraisal, and discipline are equitable, legal, and current; ensuring that human resources are adequate to accomplish programmatic objectives (requires knowledge of personnel practices and employee relations law; ability to project workforce needs)

13. Strategic Planning: Positioning the organization and the community for events and circumstances that are anticipated in the future (requires knowledge of long-range and strategic planning techniques; skill in identifying trends that will affect the community;

ability to analyze and facilitate policy choices that will benefit the community in the long run)

14. Advocacy and Interpersonal Communication: Facilitating the flow of ideas, information, and understanding between and among individuals; advocating effectively in the community interest (requires knowledge of interpersonal and group communication principles; skill in listening, speaking, and writing; ability to persuade without diminishing the views of others). Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **ADVOCACY** Communicating personal support for policies, programs, or ideals that serve the best interests of the community

- **INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION** Exchanging verbal and nonverbal messages with others in a way that demonstrates respect for the individual and furthers organizational and community objectives (requires ability to receive verbal and nonverbal cues; skill in selecting the most effective communication method for each interchange)

15. Presentation Skills: Conveying ideas or information effectively to others (requires knowledge of presentation techniques and options; ability to match presentation to audience)

16. Media Relations: Communicating information to the media in a way that increases public understanding of local government issues and activities and builds a positive relationship with the press (requires knowledge of media operations and objectives)

17. Integrity: Demonstrating fairness, honesty, and ethical and legal awareness in personal and professional relationships and activities (requires knowledge of business and personal ethics; ability to understand issues of ethics and integrity in specific situations). Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **PERSONAL INTEGRITY** Demonstrating accountability for personal actions; conducting personal relationships and activities fairly and honestly

- **PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY** Conducting professional relationships and activities fairly, honestly, legally, and in conformance with the ICMA Code of Ethics (requires knowledge of administrative ethics and specifically the ICMA Code of Ethics)

- **ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRITY** Fostering ethical behavior throughout the organization through personal example, management practices, and training (requires knowledge of administrative ethics; ability to instill accountability into operations; and ability to communicate ethical standards and guidelines to others)

18. Personal Development: Demonstrating a commitment to a balanced life through ongoing self-renewal and development in order to increase personal capacity (includes maintaining personal health, living by core values; continuous learning and improvement; and creating interdependent relationships and respect for differences).